

Systems Assessments and
Recommendations

IV. Detailed Analysis

HOLDINGS

The Library's holdings are substantial, approaching 3 million items. The Central Library houses 43% of the collection, including the majority of the system's non-fiction resources. Seventy-five percent of the Central Library collection is books, while 12% is journals and magazines. Together these categories represent 87% of the Central Library holdings and testify to its role as a reference and research center.

In comparing non-fiction holdings, those of the older branches show no significant difference in the allocation of holdings by subject area.

The branches, taken as a whole, have proportionally more videocassettes and paperback books, indicating that one of their important roles is providing popular browsing materials. In evaluating the branch collections, the consulting team compared the oldest branches with those most recently constructed. This was done to determine if newer ones with "opening day" collections might show a different type of collection or focus than those that have developed collections through varying budget cycles.

The difference between the older and newer branches is most apparent in analyzing the age of the holdings. The average branch generally has 30% of its collections dating from the last ten years. In contrast, the older branches had less than 30% of their collections dating from the last ten years, while the newer branches had 45%.

There is a direct correlation between the age and condition of the Library's collection and the usage or circulation of Library materials. Therefore, circulation data was analyzed as part of this evaluation. A brief overview of circulation information from the Public Library Data Service (1996-1998) indicates that the circulation for the entire Library has been declining slightly. While this is in line with The experience of most other libraries in the country during a positive economic environment, it is safe to assume that the absences of higher circulation for DPL is attributed to the quality of the collection. The Central Library and branches have also shown a slight change in vari-

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ances over these few years, with the Central Library declining slightly in circulation in comparison to the branches. The chart below provides the overall statistics on circulation:

Year	Central		Branches		Total
	Amount	% of Total	Amount	% of Total	
1996	750,346	18	3,430,292	82	4,180,638
1997	717,383	18	3,360,272	82	4,077,655
1998	627,623	16	3,382,620	84	4,101,243
1999	571,384	15	3,255,169	85	3,826,553

Source: Public Library Data Service Annual Reports: 1996, 1997, 1998. Data for 1999 was provided by the Library Staff.

These changing variances between the branches and Central Library requires additional study and analysis. One factor to consider is the increased number of branch libraries in recent years. The development of the Central Library's research and non-circulating collections might well mean that fewer items are circulating from the Central Library. On the other hand, strengthening the Current Collection area of the Central Library will encourage its use as a branch in the downtown area.

Circulation of library materials by media type shows substantial use of the videocassette collections, along with the CD/Record/Cassettes and paperback books. These collections are circulating at higher rates in proportion to the holdings of book and the serial (magazine) collections. While no data was reviewed to indicate historical trends in this area, the circulation of media items can be expected to grow as more items are added and these collections grow to meet community demand. Addressing the need for attractive and secure display of these materials should increase their circulation.

The Dallas Public Library does not have a comprehensive collection development policy, and as such, collections have not developed according to a stringent policy. A collection development policy has historically been viewed as a tool to help each branch define its scope, and to clarify the collection practice of the research divisions of the Central Library. Collection development policies also have been seen as providing guidance in the amount of space needed for collections and assist in projecting collection needs and growth in the future. Without such a policy, the Library has developed a more organic framework, depending on the knowledge, resourcefulness and perspective of the staff, without providing specific restrictive guidelines.

PATRON OBSERVATIONS OF COLLECTIONS

In evaluating the Library's collection as part of this Master Plan study, it was also important to understand and consider the perception of its users. This was done via the stakeholder input process. Respondents (forums and survey) ranked collections among the Library's core services and especially valued the following services and collections:

- Wide selection of books,
- Videos, music, books on tape,
- Inter-branch loans
- Research collections
- Rare materials
- Periodicals
- Spanish language materials

It is also interesting to note here that when respondents were asked to prioritize Library spending, purchasing new books and other printed material was ranked most important.

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The public is quite aware that new books appear in stores before they arrived on Library shelves. This situation not only breeds frustration for the customer but also discourages use of the Library. Simply stated, the public desires to obtain the materials faster than the current process allows. Staff in branch facilities concurred that the time for obtaining new materials was too long. Additional comments by both staff and patrons indicated that the number of copies of highly popular items currently purchased by the Library is inadequate.

While several strategies are underway within the Library operations to speed up this process, this is a valuable public service that needs continued attention and additional investment of resources.

The collections evaluation resulted in the following significant findings:

- There exists a tremendous demand for popular books and media materials in branches and the Current Collection of the Central Library. This demand is not being adequately met.
- There exists a need to improve branch collections significantly by weeding (culling out-dated material) and by providing many more high-demand items.
- Provision of children's materials (including young adult materials) is a basic service for Library investment. More attention should be given to developing the children's collections.
- The absence of a comprehensive collection development policy may indicate that selection decisions are more responsive to contemporary community desires.

Establish A Scope Statement For Each Branch And Central Library Unit

To assist with the development of up-to-date and relevant collections, the consulting team recommends that a "Scope Statement" for each Library unit be developed. The statement should establish a clear and precise definition of the unit's scope, age of collection, types of materials, depth of collection, etc. This statement should be of a general nature, should support the Library's mission and be guided by professional principles of selection. These scope statements should serve as the gauge to assess collections and will serve to guide and direct collection development.

Music, Books on Tape, and Videos

The Library has a clear role and mission to provide music in various formats to its users. The Fine Arts Division of the Central Library for example has an excellent collection of sheet music, LPs, and classical music on CD. Branch libraries and the Current Collections unit at Central generally emphasizes popular music, primarily in CD format.

Books-on-Tape are very high demand items in this City where there are so many commuters. While libraries have been collecting audio books for many years, it has been the recent addition of audio books in popular bookstores that has spurred the demand for these items. Each branch library should maintain a substantial collection of audio books with both abridged and full length books. Audio books which are now available for all age groups and in a variety of subject areas should be purchased.

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Videocassettes that include feature films and educational topics are also extremely popular, particularly in branch libraries. While the videocassette format may be replaced in the future with other formats (i.e. DVD, pay for view, etc.) for now, the videocassette is the primary way of viewing popular and non-feature film and should be included in Library collections. Each branch library should have a basic collection of popular titles that relate to its neighborhood location, along with standard non-feature items. The non-feature videos should be considered as sources of information just as non-fiction books are; their acquisition should meet patron needs and fill information gaps in the collection. In many cases, information is best conveyed by video format rather than print media.

The consulting team suggested that the Library consider non-feature videos as part of the non-fiction collection rather than as part of the video collection. Regardless of the interest areas, the video collections will continue to be popular and the Library should plan to invest more in these collections. Doing so will not only respond to customer needs and wants but will also result in increased usage of library resources and services as more people are exposed to the world of libraries.

An issue for the provision, marketing and circulation of CDs is that of security. The Library is currently challenged to minimize loss levels. To address this, the DPL should look at libraries throughout the country that are having success at making their CDs collections, more visible and easily accessible to library users while minimizing losses. Investing in attractive display units that make CD collection more visible will significantly enhance the circulation of the CDs collections.

Children's Materials

The provision of children's materials is viewed as a Library core service activity by the public. Certainly, children's services and collections are very popular activities in all branch library locations. While data does not currently exist to verify this notion statistically, there can be little doubt that children's materials account for approximately one-third to one-half of branch libraries' circulation. Adding value and strength to children's collections in branch libraries is the role (reference and research) and support the Children's Center Collection at the Central Library provides.

Children's Non-fiction Collections

The consulting team feels that the non-fiction collections should focus on providing homework support for local students. Students have come to rely on the Dallas Public Library not only for reading and research but also for access to computers and software that support their learning needs. The Central Library's Children Center should continue to play the role of providing access to historical non-fiction. The emphasis for branch libraries should focus on making available current and popular information.

Youth readers and Picture books

Youth readers are a staple of children's collections. They are heavily read and used, and therefore need to be replaced at a higher rate than other parts of the collection. It is suggested that the Children's Center in the Central Library maintain a collection of historical readers while the branch libraries concentrate on providing new and current materials that are attractive and appealing.

The children's picture book collections are currently being updated as part of a three-year project to provide new and attractive children's materials in branch libraries. This project provides a thoughtful and systematic process for removing those items that are heavily worn and in poor condition.

Young Adult books and media

Young Adult books and media are critical to any public library collection; however many libraries today struggle with the definition of this service program for each neighborhood branch. The age range and the materials to be provided make it a challenge for collection development. Therefore, for this group, it is essential that the collection be developed as a multimedia collection, with printed materials and media (CDs, audio books, software, etc.) sharing space and display. It is important to keep this collection current and that it be updated every 3-5 years.

Additional Issues of Older Branch Libraries

There exist inherent collection problems in those branch libraries that are 10 years or older. These collections require a greater infusion of resources in order to bring them up to date and become more responsive to customer needs. It is recommended that as each branch is scheduled for renovation, expansion or replacement in accordance with the Master Plan, a comprehensive collection upgrade program be considered along with the capital improvement project. These collection upgrades should include a variety of media appropriate to community needs and interests. A core collection that each branch library should be established; and any special collections or holdings that may be appropriate to the specific community the branch library serves should be added.

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Weeding

The consulting team found that, on average, branch collections are not only dated, but stagnant and in need of weeding (the culling out) of old infrequently used, worn and obsolete items. While branch personnel disliked the idea of offering outdated information to patrons, all feared that weeding and removing outdated information would leave them with little else to provide. With the exception of the newer branch libraries, it is recommended that additional funding be provided to those branch libraries that are undertaking an intensive weeding program. This will promote needed weeding initiatives and will assure that funds are available to replace weeded items.

The following chart outlines the cost estimates for improvements to the library's collections:

<i>NEW AND REPLACEMENT BRANCHES</i>		
LIBRARY	VOLUMES	COST
Arcadia Park	65,000	\$1,950,000
Audelia Road		
Casa View	75,000	\$2,250,000
Dallas West		
Forest Green	75,000	\$2,250,000
Fretz Park		
Hampton-Illinois	75,000	\$2,250,000
Highland Hills	65,000	\$1,950,000
Kleberg-Rylie		
Lakewood		
Lancaster-Kiest	75,000	\$2,250,000
Martin Luther King, Jr.		
Mountain Creek		
North Oak Cliff		
Oak Lawn		
Park Forest	65,000	\$1,950,000
Pleasant Grove	65,000	\$1,950,000
Polk-Wisdom		
Prairie Creek	75,000	\$2,250,000
Preston Royal		
Renner Frankford		
Skillman Southwestern		
Skyline		
Timberglenn	65,000	\$1,950,000
Walnut Hill	75,000	\$2,250,000
West Love Field	50,000	\$1,500,000
White Rock	65,000	\$1,950,000
Subtotal	890,000	\$26,700,000
<i>REPLACING OUTDATED AND ADDING TO INADEQUATE COLLECTIONS</i>		
Central Library	260,000	\$11,700,000
Branch Libraries	340,000	\$10,200,000
Subtotal	600,000	\$21,900,000
TOTAL	1,490,000	\$48,600,000